

Types and Risks/Benefits of Screening

Digital Rectal Exam

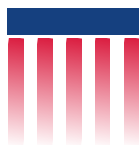
This exam is performed by the examiner inserting a gloved finger into the rectum and feeling the prostate gland. This exam can detect prostate problems in the most common area where prostate cancer develops.

Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA)

A blood test is done to check the level of PSA, a chemical produced by the prostate gland. The PSA level tends to go up in prostate enlargement or cancer or infection. The result of the test can be either normal or high. Based on the result, further examination, discussion, and/or testing may be done.



Screening for prostate cancer can lead to early detection and improved treatment outcome.



Prostate Cancer
December, 2002

Prostate problems are becoming a growing concern of our aging male population in the United States today.

This pamphlet is designed to give you information about prostate cancer screening so you can discuss any questions you may have in this area with your health care providers.

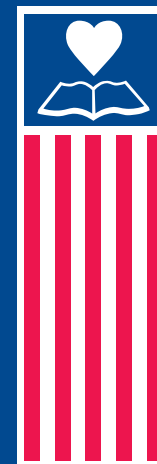
For more information please call:
Washington DC VA Medical Center:
202-745-8247

Martinsburg VA Medical Center:
1-800-817-3807

Va Maryland Health Care System:
1-800-865-2441



Screening for Prostate Cancer



Veteran's Health Information

Patient Education Series



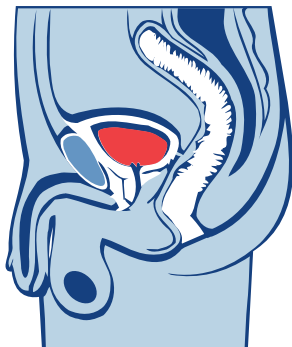
VA Capitol Health Care Network

VISN 5

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What is the prostate?

The prostate gland is a gland normally about the size of a walnut. It is located between your urinary bladder and penis. It produces a portion of the fluid in which sperm travel. The prostate surrounds the upper portion of the urethra, the tube that carries urine out of your bladder.



What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer can develop at any age. It is now the most common type of cancer in men and the leading cause of cancer deaths in men. Prostate cancer occurs most frequently in men in their 60's and 70's, but can develop in men in their 40's.

Prostate cancer usually causes no symptoms until it is far advanced. When symptoms do appear, they usually include frequent urination, dribbling, and difficulty starting to urinate.

Who should be screened and what tests should be used?

It is recommended that every man should have an annual rectal exam beginning at age 40. You should discuss the PSA test with your health care provider. The two of you can decide if you would benefit from a yearly rectal exam, and if the screening should include the PSA.

Evaluation

No single exam or lab test can provide a complete picture of prostate health. Proper evaluation starts with a medical history of urinary tract symptoms and a review of family history for urinary tract problems.

What Should I Do?

If you are a male over the age of 40 and have any symptoms or family history of prostate cancer, ask your health care provider about having your prostate checked. Early detection usually leads to successful treatment.

Treatment for Prostate Cancer

There are choices for dealing with prostate cancer once it is found. Just waiting and watching may be a choice. Treatments include surgery, radiation or hormone therapy. The decision for treatment must be decided together by the patient and the doctor.

If treatment is required, some of the risks may include not being able to get an erection and not being able to control urination.

If no treatment is chosen, the risk is the cancer may not be treated early enough. The cancer may cause problems such as not being able to urinate or to have erections. It could spread to nearby organs and lead to an earlier death.



"Prostate cancer usually causes no symptoms"